



State of Idaho

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**INFORMATIONAL LETTER #2000-5**

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**DATE:** March 31, 2000

**TO:** ALL IDAHO NURSING FACILITIES

**FROM:** LORETTA TODD, R.N., Interim Chief  
Bureau of Facility Standards

**SUBJECT:** NUTRITION CARE ALERTS

Enclosed is a copy of a letter we received from the Health Care Financing Administration Central Office in Baltimore regarding the Nutrition/Hydration Awareness Campaign.

If you have any questions about the enclosed information, you may contact our offices at 208/334-6626.

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LORETTA TODD, R.N., Interim Chief  
Bureau of Facility Standards

LT/nah  
Enclosure  
cc: Idaho Health Care Association

Reproduction  
Original on file at Bureau of Facility Standards



Dear Colleague,

On July 21, 1998, a major initiative was announced to address quality of care in America's nursing homes. Along with changes in nursing home regulations and survey guidelines, this initiative aims at reducing physical abuse and unintended weight loss and dehydration among nursing home residents. To address these goals the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) has adopted a three point approach to this initiative which we refer to as "The 3 E's" – **Enforcement** (assure quality), **Education** (understand quality), and **Empowerment** (demand quality). You may already be aware of the regulatory changes that are going into effect. However, along with tightening the enforcement of regulations and oversight, this initiative includes efforts to identify and reduce the incidence of dehydration, unintended weight loss, and pressure ulcers among nursing home residents through education and empowerment.

It is with great pleasure that we now announce to you HCFA's Nutrition/Hydration Awareness Campaign. The Center for Beneficiary Services, Division of Health Promotion, together with The Center for Medicaid and State Operations and regional office dietitians in the western consortium have been working with a diverse, representative group of concerned organizations and agencies to design a coordinated and targeted awareness campaign to reduce the occurrence of unintended weight loss and dehydration in residents of nursing homes. It is very important that your staff be aware of this effort and be familiar with planned activities, as well as support this campaign in the course of your surveys, training, and interactions with the nursing home industry.

The campaign is multi-faceted and designed to create a greater awareness of the warning signs of unintended weight loss and dehydration. This will be accomplished using the "Nutrition Care Alerts" which were developed by the Nutrition Screening Initiative. The "Nutrition Care Alerts" present an easy to use description of the warning signs of malnutrition and dehydration and action steps that can be taken to avoid serious consequences. Although this information will be useful to a broad audience, the focus of the care alerts is Certified Nurse Assistants who provide the most direct care needs to the residents. A secondary, but equally important audience, is the multi disciplinary team of care providers in the nursing home. "Nutrition Care Alerts" are already being distributed to nursing homes, State and local Ombudsman programs, Area Agencies on Aging, and other groups working in the area of long term care. Copies of the "Nutrition Care Alerts" are included in this letter. we would like for all nursing home staff to be familiar with the alert and for it to be made available to anyone who might need it. Please encourage staff to promote the use of the "Nutrition Care Alerts" in long term care facilities

whenever the opportunity arises. Your support will greatly help to increase the use of this important alert at the facility level. To obtain additional copies please write to or E-mail:

James Coan  
Health Insurance Specialist  
Center for Beneficiary Services, Division of Health Promotion  
7500 Security Blvd., MS S1-16-15  
Baltimore, MD 21244  
[Jcoan@hcfa.gov](mailto:Jcoan@hcfa.gov)

Another part of the Nutrition/Hydration Awareness Campaign is the development and distribution of a nursing home Fact-Pac. Intended for nursing home Administrators, Directors of Nursing, Consultant Dietitians, and Activity Coordinators, the Fact-Pac will provide a rationale for implementing the use of the **“Nutrition Care Alerts”** in the facility. Also included will be important information about nutrition and hydration in the elderly. The Fact-Pac is now under development and will be available early in the year 2000. When it has been finalized you will be provided with copies so that you will be aware of the information being distributed to nursing homes.

In addition to the **“Nutrition Care Alerts”** and the Fact-Pac, HCFA will also be promoting the use of the Sharing Innovations in Quality website. This HCFA sponsored website will allow practitioners in long term care to submit and share practical methods used to address nutrition and hydration issues at their facilities. In the ensuing weeks you will receive additional information about this site and how submissions will be solicited.

We hope that you will share this letter with your staff and take a moment to examine the “Nutrition Care Alerts”. We will be in contact with you again in the future as there are more developments and products to share.

Thank you for your interest and cooperation in this effort.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Cronin  
Director  
Center for Beneficiary Services

Timothy Westmoreland  
Director  
Center for Medicaid and State Operations

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Original on file at Bureau of Facility Standards

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE NUTRITION CARE ALERTS

- In October 1997, the Senate Special Committee on Aging ignited the interest of the American public about the quality of care in nursing facilities through a series of hearings on the prevalence of malnutrition, dehydration, and other serious health conditions in nursing facility residents.
- Following the hearings, the Nutrition Screening Initiative (NSI) consulted with its partners, advisors, and members of its Technical Review and Blue Ribbon Advisory Committees (BRAC) to determine how it could best address the issues of malnutrition, dehydration and other critical nutrition-related conditions in long-term care facilities. The Technical Review Committee consists of 13 individuals representing medicine, academia, and research in the area of nutrition. The Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee is composed by 27 organizations from the areas of aging and geriatrics, health care administration, hospital and pharmacy, government, and accreditation.
- Then in July 1998, the GAO released “California Nursing Homes: Care Problems Persist Despite Federal and State Oversight,” the follow-up report to the 1997 Aging Committee hearings. This report documented extreme and, in many cases, untreated health problems (like malnutrition) among nursing facility residents. The report also confirmed the essential nature of nutrition care in addressing these serious health problems and in the maintenance of the health, functional status, and quality of life for all nursing facility residents.
- After almost a year of research, consultation and fielding requests of caregivers in nursing facilities, it was evident that educational tools to better support front-line caregivers and the interdisciplinary care team were desired to strengthen the quality of nutrition care and therefore the quality of life for elderly residents.
- In October 1998, NSI formalized a Long Term Care Advisory Board to address this issue. The Advisory Committee was composed of organizations whose members reflect the interdisciplinary approach of NSI, and who were responsible for the care of nursing facility residents. These organizations are; the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the American Dietetic Association, the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists, the Case Management Society of America, the American Geriatrics Society, The National Association of Directors of Nursing in Long Term Care, the National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform, the National Council on Aging, and the National Gerontological Nurses Association.

- In January of 1999, Jane White, Ph.D., RD, president-elect of the American Dietetic Association and NSI technical advisor, led NSI researchers in a review of the scientific literature. This review focused on studies documenting the prevalence of and interventions of specific nutrition-related risk factors that long-term care experts identified as easily observable, most predictive, and for which the scientific literature and HCFA's Minimum Data Set and Resident Assessment Protocols confirmed effective interventions. Dr. White was also instrumental in crafting the tool itself.
- For the next three months, NSI staff consulted with experts and caregivers in the fields of nutrition and long-term care to expand on the research effort led by Jane White. Several drafts of the *Care Alerts* were developed and circulated to an even broader group of expert reviewers.
- In May 1999, NSI convened a meeting of the long Term Care Advisory Board and finalized the content of the *Nutrition Care Alerts*.
- In December 1999, the Health Care Financing Administration (CFA), in association with NSI, conducted field testing of the Nutrition Care Alerts in 20 nursing facilities around the country to obtain feedback on the Nutrition Care Alerts, and to collect information to be used in the development of new educational materials.
- Having obtained the commitment of Ross Products Division, Abbott Laboratories to deploy their extensive sales team to distribute the tool to a majority of the nation's 70,000 nursing homes, the NSI is now brokering distribution arrangements with its Long Term Care Advisory Board, Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee and HCFA to reach hundreds of thousands of medical professionals across the continuum of health care.

17-Feb-00